



U.S. Department of Justice
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NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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THREE FROM KANSAS CONVICTED OF CONSPIRACY TO DEFRAUD MEDICARE ON WHEELCHAIR UPCODING

TOPEKA, Kan. – United States Attorney Eric Melgren announced that **Terence W. Cooper**, 36, Overland Park, Kansas, **Paige A. Heck**, 61, Lawrence, Kansas, and **Frank D. Heck**, 39, Shawnee, Kansas, mother and son, were convicted today following a five week jury trial. Cooper and Frank Heck were each convicted of one count of conspiracy, twelve counts of health care fraud, two counts of wire fraud, and fourteen counts of money laundering. Paige Heck was convicted of one count of conspiracy, seven counts of health care fraud, two counts of wire fraud, and twelve counts of money laundering.

Melgren said that according to trial testimony from January 1996 through December 1998, Cooper, Frank Heck, and Paige Heck were involved in a conspiracy to defraud Medicare, Medicare beneficiaries and Invacare Corporation, a company that manufactures motorized wheelchairs. Cooper, Frank Heck, and Paige Heck were owners, officers, and operators of several businesses which are no longer doing business including Midwest Health Care Providers, Inc. As part of the conspiracy, Cooper, Frank Heck, and Paige Heck placed ads in newspapers advertising a “Senior Wheels Program” involving power wheelchairs, scooters and walkers with a 1-800 number for people to call for a “mobility needs” visit. Cooper, Frank Heck, and Paige Heck defrauded Medicare of at least \$642,972.82 by “upcoding”, that is, by billing Medicare for more expensive motorized wheelchairs than were provided to Medicare beneficiaries and by billing Medicare for more expensive wheelchair seat cushions than were provided to Medicare beneficiaries. From the Fall of 1997 through October 1998, Cooper, Frank Heck, and Paige Heck devised and executed a scheme to defraud Invacare Corporation by inducing Invacare to continue providing products on credit when Cooper, Frank Heck, and Paige Heck knew that the Medicare proceeds received from the sale of Invacare products would not be used to repay Invacare, but would instead be diverted to fund another business, Total Body & Fitness, a health care club in Olathe, Kansas. Cooper, Frank Heck, and Paige Heck used the money generated from this conspiracy to fund other businesses and to pay for personal expenses.

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Cooper, Frank Heck, and Paige Heck each face a maximum of five years in federal prison, without parole, for conspiracy and wire fraud and a maximum of ten years for health care fraud and money laundering.

Melgren commended the excellent work of the Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Inspector General, and the FBI in this investigation and Assistant U.S. Attorney Tanya Treadway in this prosecution.

“Medicare is a crucial health care program for older Americans and those who perpetrate this kind of fraud need to be aware that skilled and dedicated investigators will discover their schemes and we will prosecute those involved to the fullest extent of the law.” Melgren said.

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